

Stork was a Blackhawk

Wiesbaden medic helps deliver baby during helicopter flight in Afghanistan

Corps medic Spc. Kyle Storbakken might consider changing his name to “Stork-bakken” now, after helping deliver a baby Afghan girl in a helicopter on the fly.

Storbakken, of the Corps’ 159th Medical Company based in Wiesbaden, is credited by a team of Army medics from Forward Operating Base Salerno with providing vital assistance in delivering the girl — and perhaps saving the lives of the infant and her mother — while flying in the back of a UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter in mid-March.

It’s not exactly the kind of scenario an Army medical evacuation helicopter crew member expects to face in a battle zone, and Storbakken seemed a little taken aback by the event.

“It was pretty intense,” the specialist

“It’s great to have helped bring a life into the world, rather than having one taken.”

said. “It’s hard to believe we helped a woman give birth to a baby up there.”

The mother, the 40-year-old wife of a village elder near Shkin, had been in labor for 18 hours when the village midwife notified a nearby U.S. military medical sergeant of her serious complications.

The sergeant’s diagnosis of the mother’s situation was bleak — that her condition could threaten both her life and the baby’s. Officials at Combined Joint Task Force 76 launched a medical helicopter from FOB Salerno, near the town of Khowst, to evacuate the woman to a U.S. Army hospital.

But the little girl could not wait to arrive. Storbakken, a medical technician, and Dr. (Lt. Col.) David Barber, commander of the 249th General



Photo by Master Sgt. Geoffrey Carter
Spc. Kyle Storbakken, a medic at Forward Operating Base Salerno in Afghanistan, delivered an Afghan woman’s baby while in flight in a Blackhawk helicopter.

Hospital’s medical detachment at FOB Salerno, delivered her while in flight from Shkin back to Khowst.

The baby and mother were transported to Bagram Airfield, where doctors reported both to be in good health.

“It’s a credit to the entire medical team, from the medic on the ground to the aircrew and the hospital staff,” said Maj. Shannon Beckett, commander of the 68th Medical Company Forward (Air Ambulance).

Beckett and all involved credit Storbakken, 25, of Mukilteo, Wash., for his outstanding efforts.

Storbakken helped the woman and her husband onto the helicopter. Shortly after it took off, the woman’s situation appeared to worsen, Storbakken said. A few minutes after pilot Chief Warrant Officer 3 Erick Swanberg took off at full speed toward the U.S. camp near Khowst, Storbakken came over the aircraft’s intercom with good news.

“We’ve got a baby girl,” announced the specialist, after he cut the umbilical cord.

Swanberg radioed to escort aircraft, “Hey, we’ve got another passenger on board.”

The girl’s birth may be the first time a baby was born aboard a helicopter in a combat zone, Swanberg said.

“It’s great to have helped bring a life into the world, rather than having one taken,” Swanberg said.

The event is still sinking into the minds of the crew, which also included 1st Lt. Joshua Ingram and Spc. Daniel Pappizzo.

“I’m just glad we were there to help,” Storbakken said. “It was pretty amazing.” (Combined Forces-Afghanistan release)



Photo by Sgt. Christopher Stanis
A tank fires during Table VIII gunnery, individual crew qualifications, at Rodriguez Range in South Korea.



Photo by Sgt. Christopher Stanis
Members of Büdingen’s 1-1st Cavalry stand in formation in Pusan, Korea, during Operation Foal Eagle.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Suzanne Day
Soldiers from Büdingen’s 1st Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment, prepare for a live-fire exercise with M1A1 Abrams tanks and M2A2 Bradley fighting vehicles at Rodriguez Live Fire Complex, Republic of Korea.

Iron cavalrymen deploy to Korea

Büdingen Soldiers test their abilities in Operation Foal Eagle

By Sgt. Christopher Stanis
1st Armored Division Public Affairs Office

Seventy-seven rollin’ down the Strip, 87 troopers gonna take a little trip.

This isn’t a refrain from a unit’s favorite running cadence; this was a scene taken from real life for Iron Soldiers of the 1st Armored Division’s 1st Squadron, 1st U.S. Cavalry Regiment.

The 87 Cavalry Soldiers — comprised of two platoons from Comanche Troop and members of squadron headquarters — deployed March 8 and 9 to Korea in support of Operation Foal Eagle.

The exercise brings all branches of service together from around the world to demonstrate intra-theater lift capabilities — that is, the movement of military equipment throughout the area.

“The exercise is designed to show that we can be put in to theater, draw prepositioned war equipment, move it and put it into action,” said Capt. Chase Metcalf, C Troop commander.

Although the one-month event assesses the capabilities of the U.S. armed forces, the Blackhawk Squadron gets something extra from this mission, he said.

“Gunnery and crew qualification are an added bonus,” said Metcalf. The unit spent about a week at Rodriguez Range located near the Demilitarized Zone separating the two Koreas firing prepositioned tanks and Bradley fighting vehicles.

The Soldiers were already in the mindset of laying rounds downrange, having conducted their annually required gunnery at the Grafenwöhr Training Area in January and February, so despite any obstacles, they “slid into it,” said Staff

Sgt. Aaron Johnston, C Troop’s 4th Platoon sergeant.

“This gunnery really tested our abilities,” he said. Johnston also commands the troop’s tank number C4-4. “This isn’t our equipment, so we didn’t know what was wrong with it when we got it; but in three or four days we got it up and ready to qualify.”

Another challenge the Iron cavalrymen have had to adapt to is the range itself.

“This range is a lot more spread out than at Grafenwöhr,” said Spc. Jose Alvarado, Bradley driver for C3-6. “We have to use our thermal (sites) because everything is so spread out and the targets blend in with the (landscape).”

Overall the Soldiers of 1-1st Cavalry have found their trip to South Korea to be beneficial training.

If you go to the same range all the time you get lax because you know what is going to happen,” said Pfc. Courtney Rayford, Bradley driver for C3-3.

“(Rodriguez Range) is also more challenging than Grafenwöhr. It’s always good to take on new challenges.”

“Training in a different environment is always a good thing,” said Sgt. Joseph Ryker, a Bradley gunner with C Troop. “Just give me something that shoots, and I’ll squeeze the trigger.”

Although Ryker enjoys the idea of new training, he said he was most impressed by his unit’s deployment capabilities.

“It’s awesome how the Army can make this happen,” he said. “We were able to make a move like this in a pretty short time, and now we’re sitting in Korea, training.”

Metcalf said he was pleased with the high numbers his cavalrymen were scoring on the tables.

The troop racked up a number of superior and distinguished rankings. A “superior” is rated as 800 points or higher. “Distinguished” goes to crews that shoot 900 points or more.

Despite working with several handicaps — an unfamiliar range, mountainous terrain rougher than Germany’s Grafenwöhr Training Area and prepositioned war stock equipment far older than what they use in Germany — one tank crew even captured the coveted 1,000.

Tank C4-4, crewed by Staff Sgt. Aaron Johnston, tank commander; Spc. Russel Pace, gunner; Pfc. Raymond James, driver; and Pfc. Donovan Chee, loader, took the honor.

Overall the two platoons averaged a score of “distinguished.”

“These guys have once again proved that they are the top platoons in the squadron and can take on anyone, anytime, anywhere in the world,” said Metcalf. “I am very proud of them and would take them to war right now.”

By Sgt. Adrian Schulte
Peer Mullah Khan, his wife, Melawa, and their new baby rest in the coalition hospital at Bagram Airfield. The baby was born in the back of a Blackhawk helicopter in flight while the mother was being rushed to a hospital.